



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**OCTOBER 10, 2001**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MAN INDICTED FOR 1998 KIDNAPING DEATH OF KC TEEN GIRL**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a man already serving a life sentence in a Kansas prison for the 1998 murder of an elderly Kansas City, Kan., woman, was indicted today by a federal grand jury for allegedly kidnaping and killing a 16-year-old Kansas City, Mo., girl that same year.

**Wesley Ira Purkey**, 49, is charged with one count of interstate kidnaping resulting in death, according to the indictment returned this afternoon in Kansas City, Mo.

The indictment alleges that on January 22, 1998, **Purkey** forcibly kidnaped Jennifer Long and transported her from Kansas City, Mo., to Lansing, Kan., for the purpose of raping her, and that Long died as a result of **Purkey's** actions.

Long has been listed as a missing person since January 23, 1998. The 16-year-old sophomore at East High School in Kansas City, Mo., attended her first two classes on the previous day but apparently left the school grounds before the third hour of the school day was in session, U.S. Attorney Graves said. Long's body has not been recovered, he said.

**Purkey** is currently serving a life sentence in the Kansas Department of Corrections for the October 27, 1998, first-degree murder of Mary Ruth Bales, an 80-year-old Kansas City, Kan., woman who was bludgeoned to death with a hammer in her home.

If convicted as charged in the indictment, **Purkey** could be subject to the death penalty, or in the only alternative, a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000.

U.S. Attorney Graves said that his office will formally ask U.S. Attorney General John D. Ashcroft to approve a request to pursue the death penalty against **Purkey**.

Approval of the Attorney General is a federal statutory requirement for prosecutors who

seek the death penalty for defendants charged with capital crimes, Graves noted.

Graves cautioned that the charge against **Purkey** is simply an accusation, and is not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charge must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

The case is being prosecuted by Deputy U.S. Attorney Matt J. Whitworth. It was investigated by the FBI and the Kansas City, Kan., and Kansas City, Mo., police departments.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

[www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow)